

**City of Alexandria, Virginia
Park and Recreation Commission**

SUMMARY MINUTES OF

**PUBLIC HEARING AND
REGULAR MEETING**

**Thursday, March 22, 2012, 7:00 p.m.
Jerome “Buddie Ford “Nature Center
5700 Sanger Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia**

Commission Members: Chairperson Judy Guse-Noritake, Stephen Beggs, Richard Brune, William Cromley, Brian McPherson, Robert Moir, John Sullivan, Mollie Timmons.

Absent: Gina Baum, Ripley Forbes, and Caleb Vogt (all excused).

RPCA Staff: Director James Spengler; Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director Park Operations; William Chesley, Deputy Director Recreation Services; Laura Durham, Open Space Planner, Park Planning; Ron Kagawa, Division Chief Park Planning;

Absent:

Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant; Cheryl Lawrence, Acting Director, Special Events/Marina.

Guests: Jeffrey Farner, Deputy Director, Planning & Zoning (P&Z), Zunilda Rodriguez (P&Z), Sandra Marks, Division Chief, Transportation Planning Division (T&ES), Catherine Puskar, Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich & Walsh, P.C., Jeanne Gardner, Chinquapin Advisory Council, Jack Sullivan, resident, Seminary Hills.

Speakers-Public Hearing *: Lynn Bostain (Friends of Dora Kelley Park), Diane Costello, Dave Dexter (Friends of Dora Kelley Nature Park), Nancy Jennings (Seminary Hill Association), Catherine Puskar, Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich & Walsh, P.C.

*See pg. 4 for Public Comments including notes on written comments received.

I. Call to Order by Chair

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Members of the Commission introduced themselves.

II. Approval of Summary Minutes from January 19, 2012, February 16, 2012. -
Deferred until after the hearing.

**III. Public Hearing on the open space and related recreational elements of the
Beauregard Corridor Small Area Plan.**

Prior to members of the public offering comments and questions about the plan, Laura Durham (RPCA) presented an overview of those elements of the Beauregard Small Area Plan (the Plan) that fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission – its park, recreational and open space elements.

- Information on the Beauregard Corridor plan is posted on the City Website at www.alexandriava.gov/Planning and Zoning - Beauregard Corridor Small Area Plan. <http://alexandriava.gov/BeauregardPlan>.
- The briefing reviewed the Plan's overall development framework; identified buildings slated for redevelopment, noted that the Dora Kelley Nature Center lay just outside the Beauregard planning area, and reviewed the Plan's overall land use strategy for residential, commercial, and retail. Staff highlighted the existing roadway network and noted the very limited pedestrian connections that currently exist. The Plan proposes a new road network including arterial, secondary, and local streets with new sidewalks and trails to facilitate improved pedestrian circulation along the Beauregard Corridor. Staff noted the City's top open space needs as passive open space and trails (based on the 2011 Citywide Needs Assessment).
- Staff said information on private open spaces in the corridor is not yet available, but will be provided with the zoning plan if the small area plan is approved. The Winkler Botanical Preserve and Dora Kelley Nature Park are existing public open spaces, with Dora Kelley Park just outside the Plan's boundary. The Plan's proposed new public open spaces were reviewed and a proposed new trail network identified. It was noted that spaces for public gardening and a full-sized fenced dog park will be required.
- A full-size synthetic turf athletic field at William Ramsay School, is included in the Plan is expected to be available within 10-15 years and will be provided through developer contributions.
- The Plan includes additional developer funding for active athletic space at a nearby school or park (i.e., John Adams or Frances Hammond schools or Chambliss Park.) These areas would likely not be available for at least 10 years.
- Staff reviewed the rationale for the Plan's proposed new neighborhood street that would run along Dora Kelley Nature Park, including the likelihood that the road would deter "privatization" of Dora Kelley Park by the new adjacent residential buildings. North Chambliss Street currently fronts on the park.
- Staff reviewed requirements for how the \$1.5 million in DoD Open Space mitigation funds, received by the City to mitigate the lost open space resulting from the BRAC development, must be used.
- Farner (P&Z) noted the community interest in understanding how and when those funds could be spent in a timely manner. Farner said the City is considering acquiring an area of approximately 0.85 acres adjacent to Dora Kelley Park, and noted that land value in the area is high. Staff is working with JBG, the current owner of that property.
- The Chair urged that the land be purchased within the next 6-12 months to take advantage of current market values.
- The Chair said it would be beneficial to relocate the existing office building in the Duke redevelopment area, across from John Adams School, bringing it forward, to avoid the perception of public green space being a neighboring building's private yard and to consolidate public green space currently broken up in small patches so that it would become suitable for more public use, including casual athletic activities such as pick-up games. The Chair said that because the City

presently has no large public open space suitable for pick-up games, including areas for active recreation should be a priority in a plan of this scale.

Councilmember Rob Krupicka had said at the Council's recent work session that given the population this plan will bring there might be a need for two athletic fields in the Plan's area rather than the one field presently included in the Beauregard SAP.

- In response to a question about whether a road running between John Adams and Ramsay schools is needed, T&ES staff said the road would address school access requirements.
- Staff reviewed the Foster-Fairbanks area at the intersection of Seminary Road and Beauregard Street, the Hekemian redevelopment property. The Plan will be revised, as the earlier version identified the green space internal to the development. Staff has been discussing with the developer the idea of keeping the City-owned property, and adding land to it in a way that would double the public open space on that site, to create a one acre public park, that is no longer internal to the site. The Chair commended staff for this approach, and said it would greatly increase open space around the office buildings in a way that is more usable for recreation.
- **Next Steps:**
- Farner advised the Commission that the next steps related to the Plan would be to finish the Plan's second draft, reflecting public comments received, to hold a public open house in April, and to submit the Plan to City Council and the Planning Commission, in May.
- The Chair reported that the Commission would make no decisions related to the Plan until its next meeting in April, and would then convey the Commission's recommendations by letter.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Chair reported that letters commenting on the Plan had been received from the Friends of Dora Kelley Nature Park, from Nancy Jennings on behalf of the Seminary Hills Civic Association, from Andrew Macdonald, and Dave Cavanaugh, and they would all be made part of the official public hearing record.

Speaker 1: DIANE COSTELLO (Lincolnia Hills resident)

- Called for independent verification of the Plan's proposed 45 acres of new open space, including information on the surrounding and adjacent building heights
- Called for clear definitions of the terms "open space", "park", and "greenway" as used in the Plan,
- Questioned whether the appropriateness of designating the area around the ellipse as both open space and greenway, and asked how this area might be used.
- Regarding the \$1.5 million BRAC mitigation funds, asked whether there are other restrictions on using the funds, other than the time limits recently disclosed.
- Recommended that any and all easements and Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) be clearly marked on the Plan.
- Asked who would fund the RPA stream improvements mentioned in Sec 4.33.
- Emphasized the importance of preserving tree canopy, noted it is currently 38%, expressed concern that the Plan proposes to keep the canopy at 40% of each

neighborhood by using a combination of “offsite” and “onsite improvements” and asked for more clarity about what “offsite trees” would include. For example, could a tree on Eisenhower Ave. be counted as part of this canopy?

- Disagreed with staff comparing actions proposed to mitigate development’s impact on Dora Kelley Park, which is about 55 acres, with actions related to the much larger Rock Creek Park and Central Park.
- Urged the importance of the Plan’s distinguishing between trails to be used by bicycle commuters and those intended for lower-speed multi-modal transit use.

Speaker 2: LYNN BOSTAIN – Rayburn Avenue resident (across from JBG). Vice President “Friends of Dora Kelley Park”.

- Said she is a dog owner; and inquired where the dog park would be. The Chair responded that the Commission had not yet received any details regarding the proposed dog park.
- Said she was concerned that tree loss related to the Plan would not only be within Dora Kelley Park but also, for example, in the JBG area, and that the area outside Dora Kelley currently hosts some 100-year old trees that should be protected to preserve the tree canopy.
- Questioned the justification of the proposed road adjacent to Dora Kelley Park, expressed concern about potential damage from cars using the road, and said that because, as a long-time resident, she had not seen residents use this area as a private backyard, she saw no need to use the road as a design feature to discourage privatization of this public space.

Speaker 3: NANCY JENNINGS - President, Seminary Hill Association, Inc.

- Submitted two documents to the Commission – “Seminary Hill Assoc., Inc. Opposes This Draft Beauregard Corridor SAP”, and a written statement “Provide a REAL Park on the Foster-Fairbanks Tract” a.k.a. Shirley Gardens a.k.a. Upland Park - which the Chair entered into the record.
- Reported that the Civic Association considers the draft Plan “severely flawed” and needing significant restructuring,
- Recommended the Planning Commission and City Council not act on the Plan until the Association’s concerns are addressed to the satisfaction of stakeholders, and said the Seminary Hills Civic Association’s concerns about the Plan’s parks and recreation elements had been sent in June 2011 to the Commission and City Council but had not yet been addressed.
- Recommended the City purchase, using part of the \$1.5 million DoD mitigation funds, all of the Foster-Fairbanks Tract for use as a park to benefit West End and all City residents.
- In response to a question from the Chair, staff advised that many of the houses among the Foster-Fairbanks properties had already been sold for development. Mr. Cromley suggested the price tag for the City to acquire the properties now might be as high as \$10 million and that the City was unlikely to have the funds available.
- Offered as a personal, not civic association, recommendation that the Commission delay action on the Plan, until the Plan’s use of “open space” is clarified, also said that she considers designating traffic islands and spaces between streets as open space inappropriate.

- Supported Plan’s proposal to add 7.2 acres to Dora Kelley Park, but said the City should conduct a cost-benefit study of the City’s buying property for expansion.
- Asked if construction of the proposed field would require drainage mitigation.
- Questioned whether the planned \$3 million of developer funding for landscaping and street scaping would be sufficient to mitigate damage to park and stream damage from development-related storm-water runoff.

Speaker 4: DAVID DEXTER – Alexandria Resident, Harding Avenue. Representing “Friends of Dora Kelley Park”.

- He advised that a more detailed version of his comments had been included in the January 4, 2012, letter submitted by “Friends of Dora Kelley Park” to the Commission and City Council.
- He appreciated the morning walk-through of the Dora Kelley Nature Park and noted it was well attended. He also said that a meeting with the architects regarding the proposed new athletic field would be helpful.
- He is pleased that, regarding Dora Kelley’s western boundary with JBG property, JBG is willing to push buildings back to accommodate a proposed road. He suggested a bike trail and pedestrian walkway be put in this location rather than a road.
- He said there are already many existing entrances to Dora Kelley Park and he is concerned about the proposal to add additional entrances ‘willy nilly’, and urged that any expansion of trails into the park be done in a controlled manner. (Environmental damage can occur at all these points from increased foot traffic.) Currently there are entrances at Beauregard Street, North Morgan Street, Chambliss Street, Doria Drive, Holmes Run Parkway, Sanger Avenue, and from the Buddie Ford Nature Center and the playground at William Ramsey School.
- Regarding stabilizing the Holmes Run stream bank, said that three years earlier the US Army had agreed to pay \$400,000 for stabilization related to the BRAC project but that no funds have yet been spent. He recommended that T&ES begin this work promptly since delays allow ongoing stream bank erosion to continue.

Staff follow-up: The Chair asked T&ES to advise the Commission whether work had begun on stream bank stabilization.

The Chair responded to questions and concerns raised by public comments.

- In response to comments made by Ms. Bostain. The Chair agreed the City should identify specimen trees in the plan area whose uniqueness justifies special protection, an approach taken in the Woodrow Wilson construction zone in one notable case.
- Said she supports the idea of having a pedestrian/bikeway or park road where these uses have primacy rather than a regular neighborhood road along Dora Kelley’s perimeter, and emphasized the importance of considering what type of restrictions on cars might be imposed if a new road is added.
- Recommended considering the idea of not having roads available 24/7 to cars for the Dora Kelley Park perimeter road and other appropriate City roadways.
- Said she is concerned about how the ellipse’s open space is characterized since it is unlikely to be usable open space.

- Responding to a speaker's point regarding the relative value of different types of open space, the Chair reported that, in light of the City's open space plan having been written ten years earlier, an Open Space Summit has been planned for May to discuss these and other open space-related issues.
- Expects people walking daily in the community to be the most active use of community open space and that the Beauregard Corridor's planned "green fingers" of open space would be a beautiful element of the redevelopment.
- In response to public comments, the Chair agreed that multi-modal recreational routes should be separated from commuter bike routes to avoid people traveling on the same routes at significantly different speeds. She also said it would be unnecessary to provide lighting for commuter bike trails since bike commuters have lights on their bikes.
- In response to the Chair's question, staff confirmed that the School Board had approved the proposed athletic field's inclusion in the plan at William Ramsay Elementary School. Said Commission will follow-up on details for the athletic field siting and other issues.
- Responding to concerns raised regarding impact on the tree canopy, the Chair said that the Commission would follow up on this question, and suggested that "receiving areas" for reforestation should be identified now so that plantings could be done soon to provide a more mature canopy 10 years from now.
- In response to concerns raised by speakers regarding whether adequate developer funding would be available to address the environmental and conservation impacts of redevelopment, the Chair confirmed with staff that LEED neighborhood certification, and LEED certification for buildings are both elements of the Beauregard Corridor redevelopment plan. LEED certification requires developers to address issues such as storm water runoff, water conservation, energy conservation and other issues that are addressed during redevelopment. The Chair advised that this issue would be among those planned for discussion at the Open Space Summit. Mr. Cromley noted the importance of recognizing the difference between a LEED-certified building and a neighborhood LEED certification, noting that, unlike the Beauregard Corridor Plan, the BRAC development had not been a LEED-certified neighborhood.
- The Chair invited Cathy Puskar to comment on the tree canopy issues. Puskar said that the City's requirement for a site DSUP is 25% and that because the developers had not understood that there was an interest in preserving a 40% percent tree canopy, they had focused instead on recreational amenities and other issues such as preserving Beauregard Street's character.
- In response to the Chair's question, staff advised that the \$3.2 million planned as additional funding for active recreation improvements is in current-year dollars and would increase over time to reflect inflation as needed.

Staff follow-up: The Chair asked staff whether the deposit interest from the \$1.5 million of DoD BRAC open space mitigation funds received by the City will be added to the City's Open Space Fund, and said if this interest is not intended to be dedicated to the Open Space Fund, this question should be addressed at the May Open Space Summit.

Hearing Closed. The Chair closed the public hearing at 8:07 p.m.

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

Resumption of Commission Meeting. The Chair opened the Commission's regular meeting at 8:10 p.m. and introduced new District III Commission representative Brian McPherson.

II. Approval of Summary Minutes from January 19, 2012, February 16, 2012.

- Rich Brune moved to approve the January 19 minutes, Bob Moir seconded the motion and the minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.
- Brune moved to approve the February 16 draft minutes, Moir seconded the motion and the minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

IV. Division Updates – See staff reports posted to RPCA Website (insert website)

A. Recreation Programs and Service Update - William Chesley- See Staff Report

- The Chair commended the Department for adding activities for seniors such as kickball, Frisbee, pickle ball, and other activities. Mr. Chesley reported participation has been good.
- Mr. Chesley reported the Department plans to raise the minimum age for children using outdoor pools without adult supervision, raising it from 7 to 12 years old and making it consistent with the age limit already in effect for Chinquapin's indoor pool. Supervising adults must be 18 years or older.

B. Park Operations Report - Jack Browand – See Staff Report.

- No questions were received from Commissioners.

C. Office of the Arts Update - Alisa Carrel (not in attendance) - See Staff Report.

- No questions were received from Commissioners.

D. Park Planning Updates – Ron Kagawa and Division Team – See Staff Reports.

(i) Division Updates:

- **Active Park Projects – Update (see staff report)**
- **Carlyle Plaza II - Update**

Mr. Kagawa reported that the Plaza II is the northern-most piece of the development. Part of the Eisenhower Circle, near Whole Foods, would be removed and the Eisenhower statue moved to the Eisenhower Metro Station. The developer will maintain this City-owned public space. The Chair reported she had discussed the plan with staff and there are complicated design issues regarding how best to use and provide access to the public space. In response to a question, the Director said a future bridge is planned to connect the bike path and the trail.

- **Transitway Corridor B Feasibility Study - Update**

Mr. Kagawa reported that this is a T&ES study of Corridor B (Duke Street focusing on multi-mode east-west transit through the City, including a master plan. Staff called the Commission's attention to the fact that the plan will impact .2 acre from three parks along Duke Street.

These include .095 acres at Ewald Park, .05 acres at Ben Brenman and .02 acres at Schuyler Hamilton Jones Park. This will be provide an increase in access to the parks, and staff considers this as having a positive impact on the parks.

The Chair said that although the Commission sees the advantage of creating a dedicated bike lane to increase access to Brenman Park, it continues to be concerned whenever T&ES proposes removing parcels of any size from existing parks and open spaces. She also highlighted the importance of locating bike lanes in a manner safe for riders that avoids, for example, placing trails next to parked cars.

Staff follow-up: The Chair asked the Department to convey to T&ES the Commission's continuing concern about removing land from existing parks and open spaces.

- **Braddock Open Space**

The Chair reported that, although she remains open to suggestions, she has serious concerns about P&Z's plan to keep, rather than knock down the existing old building on the land parcel purchased by the City for use as open space. The Chair said that P&Z had determined after the City had purchased the land that the Old Post Office should be preserved. The Chair questioned whether the City would have bought the land if it had not intended to use the site as open space. The Chair reported that although she has asked the P&Z Director to meet with the community to discuss this change of plans. Mr. Cromley reported that the neighborhood opposes keeping the building.

Follow-up: The Chair would like a community meeting to be arranged with the P&Z Director to discuss the plan to keep the existing building.

E. Marketing, Public Relations & Special Events – Jack Browand

- Browand reported that some activities previously held at Ford Ward Park, such as the Jazz Festival, are being relocated to other parks.

V. Director's Report - James Spengler (verbal updates):

(A.) FY 2013 Budget and CIP

- **Jefferson-Houston athletic field** - The Director reported that ACPS consultants determined that \$330,000 is available for field development in the project. At a previous work session the School Board asked City Council for \$1.6 million for an artificial turf field. RPCA determined that a more appropriate cost for the artificial field is \$1,100,000. The difference of \$770,000 is the funding gap. Staff recommends bringing athletic field money from FY17 to FY15 to fund this difference.
- **Patrick Henry site** – The Director reported that this site remains of concern and advised that for two schools, there should be two full-size fields and planning for fields at the two-school complex needs to start relatively soon.

- **Windmill Hill Park** – \$1.3 million in unallocated funds for the project have been held with the expectation that matching funds would be received from the Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps). Because the Corps has now advised the City that funds will not be available for the project, the Department has submitted a memo to Council identifying the park elements on which the City's \$1.3 million could be usefully spent.
- **Ewald Pool** – The Department is recommending that this facility be closed as part of FY13 budget reductions.
- **Fees** - In response to a Commission question about recreation fees, the Director advised that RPCA has proposed raising fees rather than cutting services.
- **Old Town Pool** – The Director refuted the rumor that the Old Town Pool might be taken out of service.
- **Holiday Tree** – The Director reported the Department has submitted a budget memo on enhancements to the holiday tree program at Market Square.
- **City Council Work Session the following Wednesday**- Agenda items include compensation, proposed changes to the Virginia Retirement System, and Council's second work session with the School Board.

The Chair said she had risen with Council the concern raised by Ripley Forbes regarding why the City subsidizes the City Marina slip rates but is planning to raise other City fees.

B. Jones Point Park-Update – See staff report.

VI. Reports from Commissioners (verbal updates)

A. Waterfront Committee - Gina Baum (not in attendance).

- The Director reported that Council plans to re-designate the Waterfront Committee as the Waterfront Commission, and that the Waterfront Commission would be the commission overseeing implementation of the Waterfront Plan. Additionally, Council intends to expand the Commissions membership, and that detail of the future Waterfront Commission jurisdiction over waterfront parks has not yet been determined.
- The Chair reported that she, Waterfront Committee Chair Nate Macek, and Gina Baum, P&RC liaison on the Waterfront Committee had discussed the question of how the two commissions should coordinate their respective oversight jurisdictions of Waterfront Plan implementation related to parks. She said they had agreed that oversight of programming, design and use of Waterfront parks should be a shared responsibility of the two commissions and that a subgroup of both Commissions should be formally created to coordinate the overlapping oversight responsibilities.

- Browand reported that City Council is considering proposals to increase membership of the new Waterfront Commission members to 20 members, and P&Z and the Waterfront Committee had separately recommended how the additional positions should be allocated. The Waterfront Committee has recommended adding representatives from the Arts Commission, the History Commission and citizen members from each of the City's park districts. P&Z has proposed also adding Planning Commission and Traffic and Parking Board representatives.
- The Director said having clear Commission jurisdictions related to the Waterfront Plan implementation is important

B. Youth Sport Committee - Bob Moir

- \$25,000 has been received from the Cafritz Foundation for the Miracle Field.
- Kelly Cares Run is expected to raise the remaining funds needed for the Miracle Field.

C. Four Mile Run – Judy Guse-Noritake (in Forbes' absence)

- The in stream construction documents are at 95% completion.
- After 10 years of planning the project as a joint City-Army Corps of Engineers project, the Corps no longer expects to have funds available for municipal projects such as the in-stream work.

D. Freedman's Cemetery - Bob Moir

- No update.

E. ACPS & Capital Improvements - William Cromley

- A site plan has been chosen for the new Jefferson- Houston school. The orientation of the field has been changed.
- Kagawa reported that a meeting was planned for next Monday. Cromley said the community is not yet familiar with the budget advantages of having an artificial turf field and there should be outreach to them explaining it.
- In response to a question about the asphalt and non-asphalt cost differential for Frances Hammond's track, Mr. Kagawa said ACPS would make the final decision and is considering the issue. The Chair said that non-asphalt is recognized as less damaging to athletes' joints and asked whether different types of asphalt might offer different advantages. Commissioners were encouraged to contact the School Board to convey recommendations about the track and the Chair would raise this with the School Board Chair.
- Mr. Kagawa said the Hammond project contractor, Sports Construction Management firm from Charlotte, NC, has begun work related to construction submittals only.

F. Jones Point Park Liaison Group- Judy Guse-Noritake.

- No report.

G. Community Gardens Policy- Next Steps - Judy Guse-Noritake.

- Reported that an informal group has been constituted and a meeting was planned for the following week.

H. Ft. Ward - Bob Moir

- T&ES is working to address the issue of drainage from adjacent properties damaging the Ft. Ward graves. The City had installed a temporary drainage system, valued at \$15,000, but several weeks earlier an unknown party had removed it and thrown the system over the fence onto Ft. Ward property.

I. ACPS School Projects- Judy Guse – Noritake - Please see section IV-E.

J. Jefferson Houston School - William Cromley

- No additional report.

K. Open Space Group – Judy Guse-Noritake.

- A group of at-large citizen representatives and members from four City commissions plans to meet April 11 to begin to discuss the Open Space issues. Commissioners designated the Chair and Commissioner Beggs as P&RC representatives to the group.

VII. Public Comments

- The Chair invited comments from the public on topics not already discussed. None were offered.

IX Agenda items for April meeting and location.

- Swimming group comments on aquatic facilities.
- Presentation by Alexandria Play Space Assessment, on childhood obesity, including a discussion of adding playgrounds.
- Location: Charles Houston Rec Center
- A May public hearing on the Aquatic Master Plan was tentatively scheduled.

Adjournment – 9:05 PM